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From Miss Talbot's Reflections.

"O Lord, thou hast searched me out, and known me: thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising; thou art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways."

How true, how astonishing is this thought! Almighty God, my maker, is ever present with me. He is infinite in Being, and therefore must be every where. He is infinite in knowledge, and therefore every thing must be known to Him. No creature is too inconsiderable for his notice, who is the maker of all, and "careth for all alike." The friends, the relations, and acquaintance, whom I see and converse with every day, know not half so much of my conduct as He does, nor are half so attentive to it. How hourly careful should I be, then, to approve myself to Him! Among my relations and friends there are some, whom I regard more than the rest, either out of greater affection for their goodness and kindness; or out of reverence for their greater wisdom and dignity; or out of interest, as being capable of doing me more good or hurt. All these motives of the highest regard are joined in Him. His excellence is more than thought can

conceive: Whatever is beautiful or good, or amiable in the world, flows from Him as its source. In Him is all greatness and majesty, all wisdom and knowledge: Every thing that is glorious, awful, venerable. My hourly dependence is upon Him, and all my expectations, through an eternity to come. From Him I have received my life, my being, every power and faculty of soul and body. Every innocent delight I enjoy, is his gift: In every danger, He is my present help. No power but His could guide me safely through the intricate mazes of life. Hitherto his Providence has carefully watched over me, and his right-hand had held me up: And through all my future life, He, who is truth itself, has promised never to fail me nor forsake me, if on my part, I will but serve him faithfully, as in my baptismal vow I have promised to do. That blessed covenant I am going to renew, by partaking of the holy sacrament. Had not our blessed Saviour died to redeem mankind, we must all have appeared before an all-seeing God, of infinite justice and holiness, without security of being considered otherwise than as objects of displeasure. But we know, that He looks upon us now, as objects of the tenderest mercy. He invites us to "pour out our hearts before Him," at all times; to call upon Him in the time of trouble." "To look

upon Him and be saved." O my soul, in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

Let me then ask myself, as in his sight, what is the general turn of my temper, and disposition of my mind? My most trifling words and actions are observed by Him: and every thought is naked to his eye. Could I suppose the king, or any the greatest person I have any knowledge of, were within reach of observing my common daily behaviour, though unseen by me, should I not be very particularly careful to preserve it, in every respect, decent and becoming? Should I allow myself in any little froward humours? Should I not be ashamed to appear peevish and ill-natured? Should I use so much as one harsh or unhandsome expression even to my equal, or my meanest inferiour, even were I ever so much provoked? Much less should I behave irreverently to my parents, or superiors. This awful being, in whom I live, and move, and from whom no obscurity can hide me, by whom the very hairs of my head are all numbered, He knows the obligations of every relation in life. He sees in their full light the reciprocal duties of parents and children, of husbands and wives, of neighbours and fellow-servants. He knows the aggravated guilt of every offence against these ties of society, however we may be disposed to treat them as trifles: And every piece of stubbornness and pride, of ill humour and passion, of anger and resentment, of sullenness and perverseness, exposes us to his just indignation.

On Confirmation.

From Nelson's Practice of True Devotion.

As soon as we are born into this world of danger, the goodness of

God has provided his ministers to dispense to us holy baptism, and to wipe out the guilt of our birth, our original sin, by that laver of regeneration. When we come to riper years, and understand what a solemn vow, promise, and profession we then made, and are thereby rendered capable of making a public profession of our christian faith; his chief ministers, the *Bishops*, to whom, as governors of the church, this solemn rite is appropriated by all the primitive records of christianity, stand ready to *lay* their hands upon us, and by fervent and authoritative prayer, to confirm and cherish our growing belief; procuring for us, by their praying over us, and blessing us, a proportionable degree of God's grace and holy spirit, that we may be so led into the knowledge and obedience of his word, that in the end we may attain everlasting life. The advantages of confirmation are,

1. *A new engagement to a christian life.* The great business we have in this world, is to fit and prepare ourselves for the happiness of the next. We are now candidates for eternity, and according as we behave ourselves in this our state of pilgrimage, so will our lot and portion be happy or miserable for ever. The stronger therefore our engagements are, to live according to our christian profession, the more probable it is we shall succeed in the discharge of it. This solemn rite therefore is of great advantage to us, because it is a lasting admonition and check, not to dishonour our christian profession, when we have publicly, in the face of the congregation, declared our resolution to live and die in the faith and obedience of a disciple of the blessed *Jesus*; because it is a perpetual warning not to desert the banner of

the Captain of our salvation, having declared that we will fight under it to the end of our lives.

2. *It is a testimony of God's favour and goodness to those that receive it.* Considering what potent enemies we have to encounter; the devil, who by his subtilty is ready to deceive; the world, which by its flattery is ready to betray us; and the flesh, a domestic enemy at hand to ruin us; nothing can be a greater blessing than divine grace, to enable us to encounter all their various attacks. Now this is conveyed to us in this solemn rite, by the authoritative prayer of God's lawful minister, ordained among other ends for this very purpose. Besides, this lawful minister, declaring that God accepts our proficiency, and advancing us to an higher degree in the church, by placing us among the faithful, and giving us a title to approach the holy table of the Lord, is a farther mark of God's kindness and indulgence towards us; for hereby we are admitted to the most intimate act of communion with God, and are in a particular manner made partakers of the benefits of that all-sufficient sacrifice, whereby God the Father is rendered favourable and propitious to repenting sinners.

I. In the nature of their baptismal vow, which they now ratify. Were the orders of the church better observed, our youth would be better prepared for this solemn rite; for she requires, that none be presented to the Bishop for confirmation, till they can give an account and reason of their faith; of which the minister, who is to present them, is to be the judge; and not even then to be confirmed, unless the Bishop approves of them. Now when they were made members of the church by baptism, there was a

covenant stipulated between God and them. He was pleased graciously to condescend to adopt them for his children, and to give them a title to everlasting glory; and they engaged to avoid every thing that was evil, whether tempted to it by the devil the world or the flesh; to believe all those doctrines that were revealed by Jesus Christ, and to keep God's holy will and commandments, and to persevere in the practice of them. So that in this covenant, the favours and blessings God promises, are made upon condition we perform our part. All this should be well understood, before we ratify our baptismal vow; for though to entitle us to the privileges of baptism, the church admits of proxies, who promise for us; yet, ratifying it personally at an age of understanding, she requires we should be instructed in the nature of it; which is necessary in order to our practice.

II. In the nature of that obligation they lie under to perform it. Though their sureties made this promise for them in their infancy, yet they must always remember, that they made it in their name and stead, and that the engagement is really their own; and that as sure as the privileges of baptism belong to them, so sure are they obliged to make good the conditions of it. As members of Christ's church, they stand bound to observe all those rules that constitute that society. Now the great reason why Christ gave himself for us, was, to purchase to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. As God's children, they are obliged to imitate their heavenly Father in his moral perfections; and that great honour and privilege certainly requires observance and obedience. As inheritors of the kingdom of heaven,

they are obliged not to forfeit their title, which we can never be made partakers of, but by a patient continuance in well doing.

III. In the nature of the holy rite that is performed. Now this plainly appears to be a public consenting to that promise their sureties made for them, and ratifying it before the church, and promising themselves, that they will evermore endeavour faithfully to observe such things as they, by their own confession, have assented unto: whereupon the Bishop solemnly blesses them; and having received authority thereunto, prays over them, that they may receive the ordinary gifts of God's holy spirit. But the church being for some time settled, the Holy Ghost governs it by secret and invisible communications; and these common graces are obtained by such as are qualified to receive them, and seek them in a regular and ministerial way.

IV. In the character of that church officer who administers it. This, it is possible, may seem unnecessary to some people, but if our youth were early instructed in the nature of a church, as a society; and that the governors of it, called Bishops, are successors to the Apostles, and receive their commission by a divine authority, it would have a mighty influence upon the future conduct of their lives. They would not be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; they would become steadfast to the communion of the church by principle, which is the only means to secure them true members. Now the preparing for confirmation seems to be a proper time for such instruction; because the candidate

then first finds a Bishop's presence necessary to perform the office.

V. They should prepare themselves farther by prayer and fasting. After all the pains we have taken to inform ourselves in the nature of our duty, we must beg of God that he would open our eyes, that we may see the wonderful things of his law. It is from him that our understandings must receive light to discover our duty, and our wills strength and ability to perform it; and therefore to him we must address for that temper and preparation of mind, that may qualify us to receive the happy effects of this solemn rite. And in order to make our prayers more effectual, we should accompany them with fasting; a duty all along observed by devout men, and acceptable to God, under the Old and New Testament, both as it was helpful to their devotion, and as it became a part of it.

VI. By a sincere repentance for their past sins. Nothing is a greater let and hinderance to the influences of God's holy spirit, than the cherishing and indulging any breach of his holy laws. It is not reasonable to expect any testimony of his favour and kindness, as long as we remain in a state of rebellion against him. Now, by consenting to any known iniquity, we offer the greatest affront imaginable to the Divine Majesty; and therefore if we pretend to receive the influences of his Holy Spirit, we must reconcile ourselves to him by an humble confession of our past follies, by an hearty sorrow for having offended him, and by sincere and effectual resolutions of better obedience for the time to come. This repentance will qualify us to partake of the mercy of God, which, for the sake of Christ's sufferings, he is ready

to bestow upon all those that seek him with their whole heart.

VII. By a serious resolution of living answerably to their obligations. By this solemn and public profession of our faith, we may impose upon men, because they cannot discover the secrets of our hearts; nay, charity obliges them to think us sincere, if they have not full evidence to the contrary. But God, whose particular attribute it is to know the heart, is privy to our most retired thoughts; and consequently, if we engage only out of custom, and in compliance with the fashion of the world, as he rejects our pretended dedication of ourselves to his service, so he may withhold that grace which commonly attends this ordinance, since we render ourselves unworthy of the influences of it, by never really designing what we openly appear to profess. As you value therefore the blessings of this holy rite, you must seriously resolve to practice what you solemnly engage to perform; you must endeavour to bring your life to a conformity with that pattern you have now proposed. This may draw down the present assistances of God's holy spirit, and may dispose him to pity those frailties and infirmities, to which surprise and temptation may expose you, by granting farther measures necessary for your recovery. In order to this purpose, it will be very fit frequently to read over the offices of baptism and confirmation, whereby you will be acquainted with the blessings you may expect, and the duties you are obliged to perform.

The Christian Mother.

What a public blessing, what an instrument of the most exalted good, is a virtuous christian mother. How many feel that they owe to it

all the piety and virtue that adorns them; or may recollect at this moment some saint in heaven, that brought them into light, to labour for their happiness, temporal and eternal! No one can be ignorant of the irresistible influence which such a mother possesses in forming the hearts of her children, at a season when nature takes in lesson and example at every pore. O! what a glorious part does such a woman act, on the great theatre of humanity! When I look to its consequences, direct and remote, I see the plants she has raised and cultivated, spreading through the community, with the richest increase of fruit. I can fancy generations yet unborn, rising to prove and to hail her worth. I adore that God, who can destine a single human creature to be the stem of such extended and incalculable benefits to the world.

The Christian Wife.

In the character of wife, we find a virtuous woman equally existing for the happiest purposes. Nothing is more true than what the apostle has asserted, that a christian wife is the salvation of her husband. For surely if any thing can have power to wean a man from evil, it is the living image of all that is perfect, constantly before his eyes in the person whom, next to God, he is forced to reverence and respect, and who, next to God, he must be assured, has his present and future felicity most at heart, who joins to the influence of her example, the most assiduous attention to please; who knows from the experience of every hour, where his errors and his vices may be assailed with any prospect of success; who is instructed by the close study of his disposition, when to speak, and when to be silent; who

can fascinate by the mildness and humility of her manner, at the moment she expostulates and reprove; who has always a resource at hand in his difficulties, and tender apologies to relieve him from himself. The ministry of such a woman is daily found to work the reformation of our sex, when all other resources fail; when neither misfortune nor shame, nor the counsels of friendship, nor the considerations of Hell nor Heaven, have any more effect than the whistling of the elements. Merciful God! how zealously should we labour to diffuse such characters through the people!

There is a fervour in the soil of the female heart, which never misses sending up what it receives, be the culture ever so scanty; when abundant, the return is invariably glorious. We have numberless examples of women in the holy writings, and in every period of christianity, that fill us with astonishment, at the sacred sublimity and heroism of their characters; and the history of the pagan world affords likewise the most illustrious proofs, that the sex, when properly directed, can be more than the rival of man, in every action, every sacrifice, that goes to dignify and exalt the human name. Wonderful! that a creature naturally so defenceless, so weak in conformation, so timid in her ways, so unaspiring in her pursuits, should yet, under certain circumstances, possess an empire that nothing can resist, that renders her very silence eloquence—her entreaties law, nay, her presence alone, superior to the most awful considerations, in the control of licentiousness and vice. Yet so it is, such has universal experience declared to be the ascendancy of virtue and religion in woman.

The Duty and Advantages of Religious Conversation.

Man was born for social life, and was intended to have conversational intercourse with his fellow creatures, and in the delightful hours of quiet repose, to cheer his exhausted spirits, and fit himself for his active duties, by a kind interchange of his thoughts and feelings. It does not, however, usually happen, that the subjects which engross the conversation of men in general, are those which are really the most interesting and important. Religion, with all its train of lovely and infinitely momentous associations, is but too often banished from social intercourse; the name of the Redeemer is unheard; the joys of Heaven, and the terrors of perdition, are unfelt; all, in fact, is a blank, as far as concerns the best, the spiritual, the immortal part of our natures. Were an Angel to descend from Heaven, absorbed in the glories of eternity, how greatly must his tone be lowered before it could meet the apprehension of ordinary christians: The thoughts and language of Heaven would not mix freely with the current of other thoughts and language, which had been before entertained by the majority of his auditors.

To many a person it may appear a paradox, not a little difficult of solution, that while the interests of the soul are currently allowed to be the most important that belong to human nature, religion is so seldom an object of general conversation. Many reasons, however, might be given for it.

The world at large dislike, because they dread the subject. They prefer being blinded for life, to opening their eyes to the awful circumstances of their condition. To drive away serious examination into

our state before God, is one of the principal methods employed by our spiritual enemy to lull us into a fatal security; and our own hearts are but too ready to take a part in his evil devices. Thus it is, that the world agree to forget the thoughts of death, and judgment, and eternity, and systematically banish them from their conversation.

But why is it, that persons professedly religious should be often so backward to perform the duty and to enjoy the pleasures of religious intercourse? How seldom do we hear, even in circles professedly religious, of the more immediate topics of the christian profession?—When do modern christians converse as was the case with the primitive church, and with holy men of succeeding ages, respecting the wisdom and the ways of God—the love of the Saviour; the privileges of the gospel dispensation; the temptations and discouragements of the christian, his joys and sorrows, his hopes and fears, with all that concerns his heavenly warfare, and is connected with his present, or eternal destination? If the heart be “right with God,” and if the spiritual powers and graces be in a corresponding state of vigour, the tongue will not be wholly unfaithful to its task: for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” To those who really value their religious privileges, what duty can be more delightful, as well as beneficial, than that of mutual intercourse respecting the topics of their common salvation? In this, will doubtless consist, much of the delight of Heaven, and upon earth, such hallowed converse will greatly tend to strengthen, comfort, and instruct the christian, and will prove, under the blessing of God, a powerful means

for building him up in his holy faith.

But, in order to be spiritually minded in our conversation, we must be such in our private character. It is in secret meditation and prayer, that those sacred graces must be nourished, which are to shed a holy radiance around our path. It was while the Psalmist of Israel, was secretly meditating upon heavenly subjects, that the fire so often kindled, till at length “he spake with his tongue,” and invited others to hear “what God had done for his soul.” The lamp must be constantly trimmed, and the holy oil supplied in secret, before it can burn steadily and brightly amidst the agitated atmosphere of the world. We should cherish a prayerful spirit; we should habitually rise in heart and mind, to the unseen world, in order that we may bring down, as it were, that sacred fire, which is to blaze on the altar of the heart, and enkindle to a flame all the graces of the christian character. The absence of this sacred aspiration of soul, will effectually prevent our cultivating holy intercourse with our fellow creatures. The defections of the closet will evidence themselves in the hours of social conversation. Conscious guilt will close the lips; it will whisper, “what hast thou to do to take the name of God into thy mouth?” So that to perform the duty, and to enjoy the privilege under consideration, we must “grow in grace;” and evidence that growth by the increasing spirituality of our deportment; we must learn to love God better, and must prove the increase of that love, by an increasing attention to the duty of glorifying Him before men, and exhibiting in all our words and actions, an augmenting veneration for His holy name.—*Ch. Ob.*

Abstract of a Sermon by Bishop Wilson, on Places of Public Worship.

Will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold Heaven, and the Heavens cannot contain Him; how much less the house which we have built?

These are the words of Solomon, and yet he built a temple for God, and God was pleased to call it his house, and to vouchsafe his presence there after an especial manner.—This leads us to enquire, what is the meaning of the expression, 20 Ex. 24. I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

No body questions, but that God is every where present, to hear the prayers of all who call upon him in truth and sincerity. But the holy scriptures teach us to believe and say, that God may be, after an especial manner in some one place; as for instance, he is said to have come down from Heaven, to see if the wickedness of Sodom was as great as the cry thereof had made it. The meaning of such expressions must be this: It shall appear that I am among you, by the judgments that I shall bring upon the wicked, and by the blessings that the righteous shall receive from me. This is what we mean when we pray that God may be with ourselves or others; that is, that we or they may find by experience, that God sees, and hears, and is ready to help us.

But this is not all that is meant by God's presence with any man, or society of men. He is present with them by his Holy Angels to watch over them for good. Thus Abraham assures his servant, that God will send his Angel before him, and prosper him in his way. Thus God promises to the children of Israel, Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way. The prophet Daniel affirms, that he was de-

livered from death by an Angel of God, as was St. Peter from prison. Thus God is present with his servants in all places. But still he is more especially present in the assemblies of the faithful—in places consecrated to his name. There his holy angels keep their stations; there they wait the appointed times of devotion, to defend, to assist, and to comfort the worshippers of God—all which is confirmed by the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 11. 10.

After this I need not tell you, that this has been the doctrine of all christians from the time of the establishment of the christian church; that the angels are in whatever place the name of God is recorded; that is, in all places dedicated to his service. And shall we doubt of this, because we do not see these glorious beings with our bodily eyes?

With good authority then we affirm, that in the house of God, when his congregation is assembled, the angels of God are actually present with us, observing our behaviour, assisting our devotions, rejoicing over every sinner that repenteth, gladly carrying up an account of our piety to the throne of grace, and grieving to see any of us careless and unconcerned, when it is for our life.

It ought to be looked upon as one of the greatest instances of God's favour to us, that we have places of public worship, where we may have a correspondence with him, who alone can hear and answer our petitions and wants.

But then observe. God doth not promise to hear the prayers of all who appear before him, but of those only who know their own sore and their own grief. While we think that we can help ourselves; while we are not sensible that we want

God's help and blessing; while we live, as if we neither feared God, nor depended upon Him; while we ask his blessings as if we cared not whether we received them or not, it is no wonder if God does not regard us. But if we come to God's house out of a sense of our dependence upon him, for life, and breath, and all things, out of a sense of our own unworthiness, and inability to help ourselves, out of a sense of the greatness of our sins, and the danger of not having them pardoned; if we come in confidence of God's mercy in Jesus Christ, to all who call upon God in his name, resolving to live up to that measure of knowledge and power which God has given us, then we may be assured that God will hear us, answer us, and do abundantly more for us, than we can ask or think.

What is the duty of a people, who have a house set apart for the honour and service of God? It is our duty to possess our hearts with a true value of the benefit of the divine presence, dwelling amongst us.

It deeply concerns us all to know and consider, that we are sinful creatures, and without God's pardon undone forever—that we have many and powerful enemies, and without God's favour we are sure to be overcome—that we are extremely corrupted both in our understandings and affections, and without God's grace, we can neither know, nor perform our duty—that the happiness of Heaven, (which we all hope for,) is only to be obtained by keeping the commandments of God, and being in communion with his church. He who considers these things, will value the blessing of having God's house near him, whither he can go for pardon, when he has offended God—for help and grace of which he always stands in need, and where

he can hold a constant and open communion with the church of Christ, and by that means, can claim a share and a right, in all the blessings there prayed for, in all the promises of Christ made to his church, and in all the mercies he vouchsafes to her.

But it is not only our duty and our interest, to hold communion with the church of Christ, by frequenting its assemblies, but it is our duty, in an especial manner, to take care how we behave ourselves there. If the angels attend the worshippers of God; if we believe that they are indeed amongst us; how very careful should we be to behave ourselves with great decency and devotion, lest they, beholding our unconcern, even when our salvation is at stake, forsake our churches, return to Heaven, and there report that, of a truth, the fear of God is not amongst us.

And if the angels of God attend in his church, to bring your prayers before God, will any of you be indifferent whether or not you attend? Will you dare, without just cause, to spend the Lord's day, either in the morning or evening, at home, when the angels are in his church to meet you? Will not all those who are, without reason, elsewhere, be exposed to the power of the devil, without a helper?

And now, O God, we most humbly beseech thee, since thy name is recorded in this place, Let thine eyes be open, and thine ears attest, unto the prayers that shall be made in it.

From the Reasonable Communicant.
Part III.

Parishioner. Will you give any particular directions how to behave myself during the celebration of the Lord's Supper?

Minister. When the *offertery* begins, open your common prayer

book, and with your eye, (not voice,) read along with the minister, and make what short application you can to yourself, of what is read. There you will find you are reminded of being charitable in general to all, who stand in need, and in particular of being just to those who are your spiritual guides, for whom, according to the ability you have, you are bound to make a liberal provision. "Let him that is taught in the word, minister unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." If you find you have been wanting either in this charity or justice, resolve to make up those defects for the time to come. For be assured, that God does require of you, to give "of your treasures upon earth," as well as the service of your lips; and he who expects that his prayers will be accepted, while he detains from his minister what is justly his due, ought to remember, that so doth not the gospel assure us. "The Lord hath ordained, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel," and if he give grudgingly, or of necessity, when "God loveth a cheerful giver," although he may perform other religious duties, which cost him nothing, "how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

When these sentences have been read, then follows the prayer for the whole state of Christ's church militant, with which you must be sure to join, in heart and spirit, and it ought therefore to be previously read over, and with slight variations may be added to our private devotions. Never pretend to use any other prayers, or meditations of your own, or out of any other book, while the minister is praying the prayers of the church; for these are

the best and properest for the present purpose, and you must join with the congregation in their attention, and say the Amen with them, that you may reap the advantage of that common fervency, with which these prayers fly up to God.

Then follows the exhortation, to which you must most seriously attend, for it is full of excellent information and instruction; it shows you the great benefits of coming worthily, that is, with a true penitent heart and lively faith, to the Holy Sacrament, and the great danger of coming unworthily, that is without repenting of our sins, and without trusting in God's mercy through Christ. Whoever comes worthily, receives the benefits of Christ's body and blood, and dwells in Christ and Christ in him, and is one with Christ, and Christ with him, how much soever these prayers signify, and whether you understand them thoroughly or not, repent, and believe, and earnestly desire and endeavour to lead a christian life, and all is well.

When this, and the next exhortation is ended, you come to the confession of sins, in which you must join with the minister both in heart and voice, for you are much concerned in it. But when the absolution, which is next to it, begins, then hold your peace, and attend to the minister with all your heart. Absolution is the work of God's minister, and belongs to him alone in God's name. The people's part is to be silent and attend, and to say nothing, but a most earnest Amen, to that most excellent prayer. And believe me once for all, that nothing fixes the attention like silence. Join with the minister where you are bid, and at all other times be silent. Attend and make

it your own, by saying a hearty Amen. The observing of order, and decency in prayer, tends much to edification; whereas the contrary begets distraction. It offends devout and understanding people mightly, to hear men and women, joining with the minister, aloud, where they should hearken and say Amen. What can be more improper, than to hear them promiscuously absolving themselves, and one another, and taking the priestly office on them? Nor yet ought they to hold their tongues, when required to speak and join. The rubrics will give them the necessary information.

When absolution is over, attend most diligently to the sentences of scripture, which the minister is to read, and when he bids you lift up your hearts, you must be sure not only to do it in word, but in deed and good earnest, and to make audibly the responses required of the congregation. Shortly afterwards, "shall be said or sung, by the minister and people, "Therefore will angels and archangels," &c. "If, says Bishop Wilson, the form of praising the most High God were oftener in christian mouths than it is, it would most certainly render them more worthy to join in this service here, and in Heaven with the Angels of God hereafter."

When the priest comes, in the next place, to acknowledge his own, and the communicants utter unworthiness, "to gather up the crumbs under the Lord's table," and the unmerited kindness of our Lord, in admitting us to his table, you should, by the most devout attention, make it your own.

When the prayer of consecration which follows is over, (and not before,) if you have time, before the bread and wine are brought to you,

you should employ it as well as you can, either in prayer, or in reading something proper to meditate on the occasion. Remember your own offences, with as much sorrow as you can, and the mercies of God to you in Jesus Christ, with as much love and joy and gratitude; resolve in earnest to amend in what you find yourself most faulty, and ask of God the grace and power to put those good resolves into execution.

I would have you to be very intent upon what you are about; but take heed, lest while you are striving to raise your heart, you be not lost and bewildered. Strive for a serious and composed mind; let your devotion be rather regular, and equal, than exalted and transported. Attend gravely to what the minister says, and when he has repeated, "The body of Lord, &c." be sure to say, softly, a most hearty Amen. Take the bread, and while you are eating it, pray Almighty God, to grant that you may die to all your sins and corrupt affections, and live alone to righteousness and virtue; to accept your imperfect repentance, faith, and resolutions of amendment, and to let the precious merits of Christ supply the rest. When the minister, in delivering the bread or wine, says the words, "Preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life," be sure to say Amen. When he has concluded the words, "drink this, &c." take it, and drink very moderately. And after you have done, you may make some such short prayer as this, "O let my soul be washed and cleansed in the blood of Jesus that was shed for me! and let me never be unmindful of this mercy, but give thee, my blessed Lord, thanks, not only with my lips but life, by giving up myself to thy service, and walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all

my days, through Jesus Christ, my Lord, to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and forever." That your mind may be employed, while the rest are communicating, say some fit prayers, or read some short and appropriate discourse.

When all have received, and the minister returns to his prayers, be ready to join with him, even altho' you should not have ended your private devotions. Break them off, though in the middle, and join with the public ones, for that is better, and your duty; and so go on with him in heart, till he hath made an end.

Afterwards, in a short ejaculation, ask of God the forgiveness of all your coldness, wandering and indifference, and improper thoughts during the performance; beseeching him to preserve in you a lively sense of his infinite mercies shown to man in Christ Jesus, and that you may go home more and more confirmed in virtue and holy resolutions, and abide in his favour to your life's end.

Parishioner. I thank you, Sir, for your care, in thus preparing and conducting me from the beginning of this solemn performance to the end of it; and in particular for those hints of things which for the really wise, and well informed, are unnecessary, and which to those who are "wise in their own conceits," may appear trivial and needless, but to me, and to others like me, useful, orderly, and tending to edification, if rightly observed.

From Sherlock on Death.

When people see themselves dying, they are very sorry for their sins, so they say; but the most likely account of it is, that they are very sorry they are going to hell, as a

malefactor is very sorry when he is going to the gibbet. This may be the whole of their sorrow, and it is impossible to prove there can be any thing in it. What likelihood is there, that men who a few days ago were very much in love with their sins, should, as soon as they are arrested with a threatening sickness, be penitents in good earnest, and abhor their sins in a minute, and become quite other creatures? These sorrows are felt by all sinners when persuaded they are going to die;—there is nothing extraordinary in it. Why then believe it to be a miraculous power of the Divine Spirit to change their hearts in a moment, and make them new creatures, and not the common effect of a great fear, which makes men sorry for their sins when they come to suffer for them.

All this may be no more than the fear of hell, and the mere fear of hell when men are dying, though it may imitate all the scenes of repentance, will not keep them out of hell. Yet this is often, if not always, the whole of a death bed repentance, and no such dying sinner can have a reasonable hope that he does truly repent, and therefore, unless he flatter himself when he dies, with a false and counterfeit repentance, as he did while he lived with the hopes of repenting before he died, he must expire in all the terrors and agonies of guilty fears. And yet there is no possible way of avoiding this, but by such a timely repentance while we are well, and death at a distance, as may bring forth the actual fruits of holiness, that when we come to die, we may have some better evidence of the sincerity of our repentance than mere dying sorrows.

Now there is no possible way to prevent these fears when we come

to die, but by giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure, by living such holy and innocent lives, that our consciences may not condemn us, and then we shall have confidence towards God.

But this is such a remedy as few like; they would indeed be sure of heaven, but yet would go as near hell as they can, without danger of falling into it; they dare not indeed take full draughts of sensual pleasures; yet must be sipping now and then, as often as they can pacify their consciences, and get rid of the fear of God and another world; and therefore they are very inquisitive after other cures; for an accusing and condemning conscience, are mightily fond of such marks and signs of grace as will secure them of heaven without the severities of mortification, or the constant and uniform practice of an universal righteousness; and a great many such signs have been invented, which like strong opiates, assuage their pain and smarts, till their consciences awake, when it is too late, in another world.

All this is cheat and delusion, as the word of God assures us. See 1 John 3, 7, 8, 9, 10 verses.

From Miss Sinclair's Letter to her Sister.

So far is man, in a state of nature, from loving God above all things, that there is scarcely any thing which he does not prefer to God. To the majority of the world what duty is so irksome as that of prayer? What day so wearisome as the Sabbath? What time so long as that which is spent at Church? What books so uninteresting as those which treat of religion?

Every true convert becomes much more sensible than he was before of

his need of a Saviour. Though all are ready to acknowledge themselves sinners, yet those who are in a state of nature are not fully sensible of what St. Paul calls "the exceeding sinfulness of sin;" but divine grace opens our eyes in that respect, shows us our deep depravity, humbles us in the very dust on account of our manifold transgressions, and compels us to acknowledge, that there is justice in the sentence, which condemns us to everlasting punishment. To those whose eyes are thus opened to behold their guilt and danger, the gospel becomes a joyful sound, and the Saviour is indeed precious. Instead of their former apathy and indifference about religion, they delight in reading and thinking about their Saviour.

Are we then sensible that we are sinners? Do we sincerely and from the heart renounce all dependance upon ourselves, upon every thing we have yet done, or can do in future, and rely solely and entirely on the Lord Jesus for pardon, salvation, and every spiritual blessing? This, believe me, is no easy matter. This is the rock upon which the great majority of the Children of Adam do split and suffer shipwreck. To feel in our hearts how lost and undone, how guilty and depraved, we are, and how incapable of ourselves of doing any thing that is truly good, even of thinking a good thought, and at the same time to feel that implicit confidence in, and firm reliance on the Saviour, which the Bible requires, is one of the hardest tasks which ever was proposed to fallen man. It is indeed what none can be brought to, but by the effectual teaching of the Holy Spirit. The propensity to self dependance in fallen man, is so very strong, that nothing else than

Almighty power can completely destroy it. To God then let us apply for this faith, with fervent and repeated entreaties.

But let me remind you that sanctification, as well as faith, is a gradual work. The change from sin to holiness, from the love of the world to the love of God, is not instantaneous, "but resembles the morning light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day." An established christian differs in many respects from a young convert. The latter is usually beset with doubts, anxieties and fears. He feels and knows himself to be a sinner, is depressed by a sense of his own guilt and infirmities, and has not yet learned to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to cast all the burden of his sin upon him. But by degrees, more light is communicated to his mind, he perceives how God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus; he looks to Jesus, not merely as the Saviour of sinners, but as *his own Saviour*; and believes not merely that He died for mankind in general, but *for himself in particular*. Surely those who believe Him *their own Saviour*, and that He died *for them*, will feel more love and gratitude towards Him, than those who merely look upon Him as the Saviour of sinners in general. Those who thus love God, will take real pleasure in His Ordinances, and in the public and private exercises of devotion. They pray to Him with real fervour, they praise Him with real gratitude.

The faith of the gospel is the best preservative against the snares of prosperity, as well as adversity. The chief danger attending a state of prosperity is, that it strongly exposes us to the temptation of becoming "lovers of pleasure more

than lovers of God," and especially those who are young and lively, and have been introduced into gay and fashionable circles. Persons in such circumstances may be said to stand upon the brink of a precipice. They run the greatest risk of being drawn into a vortex of folly and dissipation, in which all sense of religion is likely to be swallowed up. But the faith of the gospel not only fortifies the mind against such temptations, but I might almost venture to say, that to a real believer they cease to be temptations at all. Ask an eminent christian who has just been rejoicing in His Saviour, whether he would be willing to give up those dignified contemplations, or even to suspend the exercise of them for a while, that he might go to a play, or a ball, or read a novel! and he would be apt to smile at the question. Not only does he look upon those amusements as vain and ensnaring—not only does he know that they are apt to steal away the heart from God, to indispose him for the exercises of devotion, and to draw him back, as it were, to that world whence he has, with so much difficulty, escaped; not only does he avoid them on these accounts, but he can with truth say, that he has altogether lost his relish for them, in the same manner as those, who are grown up, have lost their relish for the toys and amusements of children.

It is true indeed, that a christian may be so circumstanced as to be obliged to mix more with gay circles, and join more in vain diversions, than he could wish; but when this is the case, he will enter into them with real reluctance, and will gladly escape from them as soon as he can.

But you wish to know how this precious faith is obtained; how it is possible for us frail mortals, surrounded as we are with a great variety of temptations, thus to live above the world: thus to dwell among Heavenly objects. "With man this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible." "Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you." There is no spiritual blessing whatever but may be obtained from the Almighty, by earnest persevering prayer. If you would really desire to be renewed and sanctified, look up daily, I might almost say hourly, to Him who alone can effect this change, and examine carefully and frequently also into the state of your own mind, in order to ascertain whether your prayers have been heard and answered. If you can perceive any symptoms of this blessed change in yourself, be thankful to God, and pray earnestly that you may be renewed yet more and more, and pray to Him in faith, believing that what you ask of Him, in the name of Christ, you shall in due time receive. This will give vigour and alacrity to your prayers. Though God alone can convert us, we must not neglect any of the means of grace. You should diligently study the Bible, endeavour to ascertain its meaning, and for that purpose compare one scripture with another, looking up to God for light and direction in this exercise. The frequent perusal of religious books, is of the utmost consequence to those who wish to make progress in the Spiritual life. To the outward means add inward endeavours. Strive to believe—strive to attain to a realizing faith. Think of Him, who expired in agonies, at the very mention of which human nature shudders, to atone for your sins.

Behold Him, as it were, dying on the Cross, *for you*. Then direct your thoughts to that place, where He still liveth to make intercession for you. Imagine the greatest and best of all Beings as looking down upon you, with an eye of inexpressible benevolence, and addressing you in these most encouraging words—"Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and then ask yourself, whether there be any thing in this world, for which it would be worth your while to turn your back upon such a Saviour, and to reject such gracious offers?

From the Christian Observer.

I doubt not you will receive with candour, what I now take the liberty to offer to your consideration, on a matter of general concern, which I have often observed, and that is, the disproportionate stress which some preachers lay upon a few doctrinal points, and the high extreme to which their zeal carries them in stating and defending them. Not satisfied with introducing these doctrines into every discourse, some of those gentlemen scarcely ever treat upon any thing else, whatever be the text which they have chosen; and not uncommonly is the text itself stretched, not to say perverted, to make it speak their favourite sentiments. I have not only heard very exceptionable modes of expression made use of, in explaining or defending the doctrines of grace, but I have also witnessed such representations of the doctrines themselves, and such disparaging terms applied to moral duties, as had a direct tendency, (contrary perhaps to the design of the preacher,) to countenance that Antinomian spirit, which I fear is gaining ground among the professors of re-

ligion in the church, as well as among the dissenters. One proof of this is, that preachers of this description in the church, are particularly admired and followed by those dissenters, who are of Antinomian sentiments, and who are in the habit of reproaching such of our ministers as insist much on the grand topics of practical godliness, as legal preachers. Let me however, caution your readers, both clergy and laity, against that kind of preaching, which, under the specious name of *evangelical*, is calculated to undermine the gospel.

I had lately an opportunity of hearing a preacher, who had been greatly followed and extolled, and was surprized and grieved to find, that instead of improving the valuable opportunities afforded him, of "calling sinners to repentance," of awaking the careless, and exciting christians to abound in the work of the Lord, he avoided almost every thing of a practical kind, and generally confined himself to a point of doctrine, without at all urging its proper improvement.

I wish that what I have said may be taken as it is intended, not to disparage real evangelical preaching, but to caution those who are friends to it, against that manner of conducting it, which rather tends to encourage a false taste among the hearers of the gospel, who are too ready to prefer what is popular and singular, to what is just and scriptural; who are more fond of hearing any thing that is comfortable, than what is truly useful; and who are apt to condemn those ministers, "as legal," whose judgment and science will not allow them to gratify this corrupt taste.

If these gentlemen, on whose style of preaching I have been animadverting, were to know the true

reason of their being so much followed, I am sure they would be displeased with themselves, and that while they retained their attachment to the doctrines of grace, they would alter the strain of their discourses, and would employ a part of them in shewing the inefficacy of a speculative faith, and in exhorting "those who have believed to be careful to maintain good works."

A Dissenter.

The conceit of superior learning, says Bishop Horne, has always had an ill effect upon Christianity, and is frequently found in those who have no great matters to value themselves upon. We may be as learned as we can make ourselves, and yet continue good Christians; because true learning and true religion were never yet at variance; but the moment we are vain of our learning, we begin to be in danger, and some folly or other is not far off.

The Christian finds it as desperate to doubt the remedy, as to deny the disorder. Having formerly rushed headlong with the presumptuous, he now fears perishing with the fearful and unbelieving. He sees an atonement of God's own providing, he pleads upon God's own authority, the merit of that blood, which cleanseth from all sins; and by thus receiving the record, which God gives of his Son, he sets his seal to it that God is true.

The genuine spirit of the gospel is described as the spirit of "peace," not of rapture. An increase of heat is not always produced by an accession of light.